

**JEWISH-AMERICAN HALL
OF FAME:**

**LETTERS FROM
MEDALIST**

GERTA RIES WIENER

VOL. I



About 100 letters written by artist Gerta Ries Wiener to Mel Wacks, Director of the Jewish-American Hall of Fame, were contributed to the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution in 2007. These letters discuss her creative process in producing eleven medals for the Jewish-American Hall of Fame over a 25-year period. Many of these letters include illustrations, photos, etc. In addition, there is an article "The Incredible Gerta Ries Wiener, that was published in Coin World in 1998.



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

LOUIS BRANDEIS



December 9, 1970

Dear Mr. Wacks -

When I spoke to you on the phone yesterday from the Medallie Arts office, you wished to have the quotation of Justice Brandeis, which is to go on the reverse side of the Brandeis medal. Here it is:

"Make real the brotherhood of man."
My brother sent it to me with a sketch of how he wished to have it placed. When you asked me when I would be ready to show you my work on the medal, I rather rashly told you in about a week or two, but

did not consider that I have
to wait for the plastercasts
Mr. Sutherland is going to
send me to assure the right
shape of the 2 halves of the
medal. I don't know how
long it will take before I
get them so I can start
working - not to mention
all the commotion around
the holidays.

But I am sure I will have
something to show you
right after New Year's, and
I will then call you to
make an appointment.
I am looking forward to
meeting you.

Sincerely

Gusta Pies-Wiener

Hotel Balneario "Comanijilla"

Apartado 111 Teléfono 3-22-19

León, Gto., México.

February 28, 1971

Dear Mr. Wacks - from this lovely, sunny - warm place, quiet, clean and far from anything disturbing, New York seems on a different plane!

I just want to tell you how glad I was that my work for the Branderis Medal pleased you, and that you felt relieved about what you must find when you visited me. I was also very glad to have met you, ^{and} that we will complete this project to every ones satisfaction.

I will return to New York on March 4 and will then send you the material you wanted: The plates of the 2 sides of the relief, a photo of myself, and a few

lines about my work on this medal,
as well as a short resume. If you
could then, as you mentioned you
would, have the plaster casts made
by "Medallist Art", so that I can
retouch and sharpen the forms
for the final reproduction, it
would be finished at the time
it had been planned.

I will call you soon
after I return.

Please remember me to
Mrs. Watts. I was sorry that she
could not come along when you
came.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours

Leta B. Wiener

April 9, 1971

Dear Mr. Wacks - enclosed you find, I hope, all you wanted me to send you. The photos of the relief are not perfect, but I suppose that you want them only to show to the people in California. When you send them please mention that this is the 'plastilene' version and will be sharpened in the plaster of Paris. Whenever you are ready to have the casts made, please call me, so we can arrange to go to "Medallic Art" together. With best regards, also to Mrs. Wacks whom I hope to meet some day.

Sincerely yours Gerta Wiener



April 1971

It is, of course, always a challenge to have to do a good portrait of a person you have never seen and will never be able to, see--painting or sculpture--, as a portrait is, or should be, much more than a literal rendition of features.

I have never seen Justice Brandeis, and only knew that whoever had met him remarked on his strong likeness to President Lincoln.

When I was asked to model a relief for a medal of Justice Brandeis I had to rely on whatever kind of photos of his head I could obtain, and they were none too good for my purpose. They showed him either too young or too old, and had the lack of character of many newspaper portraits of prominent people. But having a strong mental image of the man from what he had been and said, helped me, I hope, to express some of his personality through my work, though I never was privileged to meet him personally.

The shape of the medal was given, repeating the one Victor Ries gave to the first medal in the series of prominent Jewish Americans, and I thought it fitting to also echo the style and arrangement of the quotation on the reverse side of the medal of that of Victor Ries' design .

Gerta Ries-Wiener

Judah L. Magnes Memorial Museum

The Jewish Museum of the West

2911 RUSSELL STREET • BERKELEY, CALIF. 94705 • Telephone: 849-2710

May 24, 1971

Mr. Mel Wacks
20 Garden Circle
Syosset, New York 11791

Dear Mel:

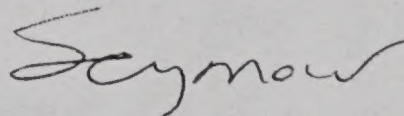
Enclosed is the sketch of changes for the Brandeis medal according to the suggestions of Victor Ries, namely, to move the face to the right and the lettering to the left. If some symbolism is needed on the portrait side, we could use the scales of justice or the flags of Israel and America, since Brandeis was the one who said that one of the best expressions of Americanism was Zionism.

On the reverse side, Ries suggests removing the heavy lines and moving the words THE and OF MAN to the left or off center. He suggests that she make the eye and face more living. As it stands now the middle is not acceptable. I hope she can make the changes before she leaves next week. If not, we will have to wait until she returns in August.

It was good talking to you and I will be making inquiries about the history series. Be sure to send the 20 medals we ordered.

With warmest regards, I am

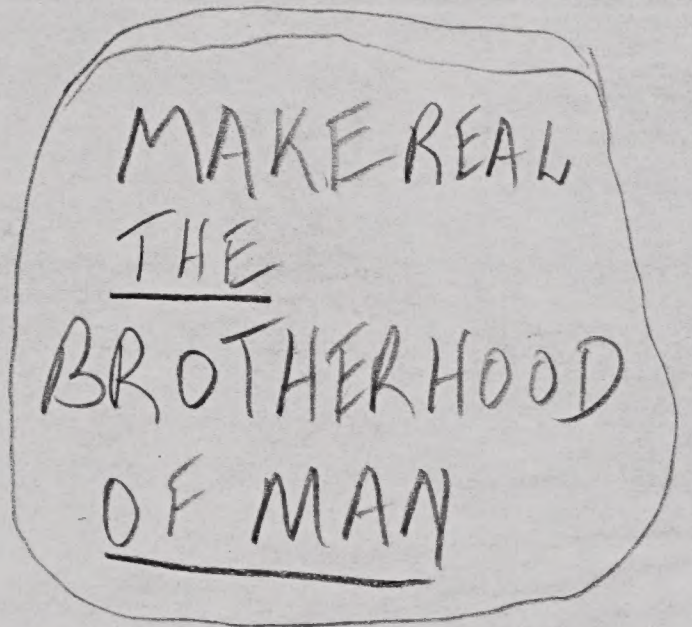
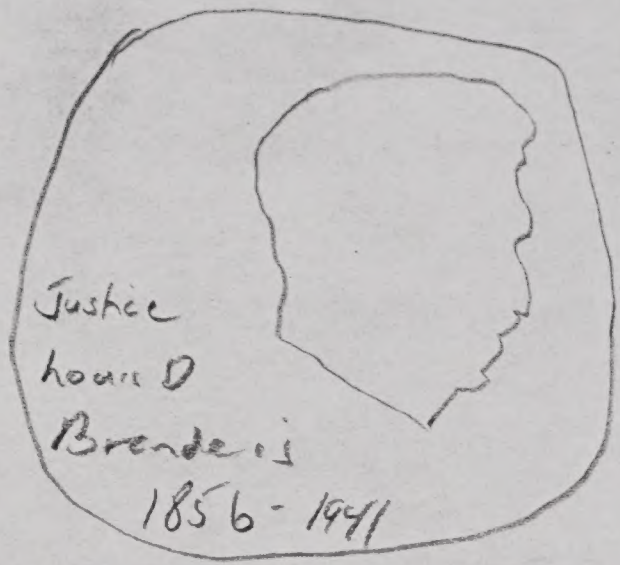
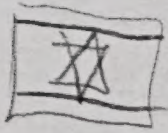
Cordially,



Seymour Fromer
Director

SF:ax

Enclosure





HOTEL KEMPINSKI BERLIN

1 BERLIN 15 • KURFORSTENDAMM 27 • TELEFON 881 06 91
TELEX 18 35 53

June 12, 71

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Wacks - it
has been a hectic but very
interesting and enjoyable
week since I came to this
unbelievably prosperous
city. Nothing like seeing
a war!!!! No unemployment
here. Even the hippies work!
They squat in long rows
along the curbs of the very
expansive and elegant "5th Ave."
of Berlin - sitting on the
cold pavement, of course, bare
foot and wild haired, all
colors and nationalities,
displaying jewelry, paintings
and other crafts on cloths in

front of them, and making
things right there. Some even
play flutes. It's very funny
and most incongruous with
the environment.

I told you that I wanted to have
to make a little plaque
here. Since it was from life
I got it done fast and to
my delight the bronze foundry
will have it done (the bronze
cast) next Tuesday. They do
beautiful work, and this plaque
will cost me exactly $\frac{1}{4}$ of the
price I have to pay in New York.
Imagine!

I hope Medallie Arts were satisfied
with the way I put my relief
into their frame, and that they
will have the cost done for me
by August, so I can complete it.

I hope you will have a pleasant
summer and that we will see
each other when I return.

Best regards

Guta Pais Weiss

November 14, 1971

Dear Mr. Wacks - Thank you
very much for your letter
and the enclosed \$50-check.

No, I have had no time
yet to contact the Park
Jewish Synagogue. But a
friend of mine is very much
interested in going there,
so I have arranged to
attend a service there with
her after Thanksgiving.

Up to then I'm tied down
by a visit from my sister
from Germany - and after
that my son + wife +
mother-in-law will be

with me for almost a week.

I was glad to hear that the very particular gentlemen from the "Medallion Arts" had nothing to say to my design and its execution, as I hope I'll feel the same when I see their work!

Have a very nice Thanksgiving Party with your family, and give my very best regards to your wife and your sweet little girls.

Sincerely

Berta Pies-Wiener

GERSHOM MENDES SEIXAS



P.S. It may not bring out the
Leixao medal in color?

August 24, 1975.

Dear Ned - it was a nice surprise,
after having met the mailman
on the street on Saturday, telling
me: "I left a book for you under
your doormat." So find that the
book was the Leixao medal.

Thank you very much for having
sent it.

Yes, the finish is better than the
sample you showed me, but I
still like the warmer darker shade
of the Brandeis medal better. But
that may be a matter of taste.
On the whole it is O.K., but I
have learned that too much detail
is not desirable - it gets blurred
in the reduced reproduction. So I
am going to be careful about it
in the design for Henrietta too.
I am working on the portrait
side of the medal first. As we
had agreed on the composition I

have not made any final sketches
for that side. But when I start on
the design with all the children,
which will involve a lot of studies
I shall send you a Xerox of what
will be, tentatively, the final
sketch. But you know, while I
work it out I may change details
to fit in with what I have in
mind. Drawings often can't show
that. In the meantime I am
sending you the pencil sketches
I made for the Seixas medal as
you once mentioned you would
like to have them.

How wonderful that you are
so happy with your new house.
I can see Debbie and Sharon
sneaking around in the pool,
having a grand time and working
off their excess energies until
school starts again. I hope that
Roster is as satisfied with the
change as you are, and that you
don't mind the commuting too
much. Love to all 4 of you.
Gerta.







March 18, 1976

Dear Mel - Thank you for
your letter and the 3 medals.
I was just going to write
you again, asking if you
were sick, or whatever happened
to you that you didn't write.
I am terribly sorry to hear
that you lost your job, and
I can well imagine that
this affected your life pretty
much, especially now that you
had bought a new house.
I hope everything will get
better soon.

Did you notice that each one
of the 3 Lixas medals are
different? And I think that
neither of them are as well
fully done as the Brant's
one. They seem "overworked,"

and I hope Henry will get better. The girls are
thanking for sending the medals. Glad to hear.

so that fine details disappear
and the forms lose their sharpness.
On one there is no "antiquing" at
all (or whatever you call the dark
shading in the depths) I'm glad
I saw this, and will be very
sparingly with small detail
on the Henrietta Gold medal
especially on the side I'm now
working on - the one with all
the children. The finished part
side is simple anyway. I'm sorry
I still didn't get the enlargement
back from the finisher. As soon
as I do you'll get it. You want
to know when I'll be finished
with the medal? That's hard
to say. It's still a lot of work
but most of it is done. You'll
like it, I know. I'll work as fast
as I can - but I have other things
to do too - one has to eat!
Best regards to you and your family.


HENRIETTA SZOLD



March 22, 1975.

Dear Mel - it was indeed good news to me that you have decided to drop the "Twin-idea" and that Henrietta Told is to have a medal of her own. As you knew it would, I was very glad to hear this. Thanks, Mel! I had already done a bit of research on Henrietta in the Jewish Department of the Public Library, and had learned about all the things she had done - but - no picture. Even in the picture collection of the library there was no picture of her. On Monday I shall call the Enderssen office to find out where I could get a picture or pictures of her, and as soon as I have this I shall start making sketches for the medal. On the sheet you sent me with photos and explanations of the Jewish - American Hall of Fame medals, the

my best regards with Mother and the children. Please.

ones of Gershwin, Haym Salomon and
Herbert Lehman were new to me. I
was very much surprised to see the
round shape of Haym Salomon's medal.
It's a beautiful medal - but how
come that you abandoned the
 shape? What is your future
policy in that respect? Do you plan
to mix shapes or to stick to the original
trapezoid one? Tell me soon! I
like the Gershwin one very much, but
I wish Herbert Lehman's shoulders
could be corrected - which they un-
fortunately cannot - ! They give
me a pain in the neck and
shoulders every time I look at
the photo, and I hope that they
don't show up as badly in the
medal itself! How about the Emma
Lasarno one? Did it get finished? I'm
happy that you think the Leixas medal
looks good. I'm looking forward to
seeing it. As soon as I have sketches
for Gold I'll send them to you.
Keep very well and happy, and soon.

This is how I always see him



Shoulder should be!! Compare!

May 15, 1975

Dear Mel - Thank you for your letter
with the enclosed fliers! And also
Thank you and Foster for the kind
invitation to visit you when I
am in California. I think I can
arrange it to go via Los Angeles
after I leave Yosemite Park. I
plan to go to San Diego to
stay there with a friend for a
few days, and then fly back to
N.Y. from Los Angeles. So far
I neither know how I'll get
to San Diego from Yosemite
nor if convenient flights leave
from San Diego to N.Y. I'll
find out all about it when I
am in San Francisco from
May 31 to June 6. Then I'll
either call or write you if
it's better ^{to} go to Los Angeles
before or after San Diego.

I have not started any clay work on the Gold medal, because it would dry out while I'm away. But I have a pencil sketch for you how I visualize the portrait. When I said I'll model it "flatter" than the 2 others, I meant it won't be as "high" & it will be gentler in its forms. No - not like the Egyptian reliefs! Too bad you couldn't give me an idea for the other side - I could have played around with that before I leave! I hope you can find time to either dig up a nice quotation from her speeches or books - or whatever you think would properly represent her contributions.

See you soon. — My very best regards to you and your family. Love,

July 22, 1975

Dear Ned and Eski - now it's just a month ago since I visited you in North Hollywood and you were on the verge of your vacation trip. Vicki wrote me that you met him and Brooke in Carmel and had a little visit with them. Now we are all back home, I presume, going about our regular business, and our several trips seem to have been long ago! Right? I had a lovely week in San Diego, and I hope that, wherever you went, you had as good a time.

I have been working on "Henrietta Sold" making sketches for the figures and the entire composition, and soon will start the modeling. Ted had me

When are you moving into your new castle?!!

me so far apart and can't work
as closely together as we did before.

Every time I think of that
Leixus medal I get an unpleasant
feeling. It did not look as good as
I had expected, and I do hope your
influence on "Medallie Art" will be
strong enough to persuade them to
make the color much darker and
not as shiny! The sample you showed
me looked neither like bronze nor
like silver. It had a wishy-washy
undescript appearance, and the
shininess spoiled the effect and
made it cheap looking. Do try your
best to have them change it, Mel!

I hope you and the kids
will have a very good summer,
not too hot not too cold. New York
has had an awful lot of hard rain
and thunderstorms, and not too
many rising days so far. Keep

well, and let me hear from you.

Love, Herbert A. W.

November 21/1975

Dear Mel - it seems a long time since we have heard from each other. Since you hadn't given me the Zip number of your new address I'm not sure that you received my last letter, nor that you will get this one.

I've been working steadily on the 120d relief and have the portrait side ready to be cast in plaster, so I can finish the lettering and details. Before I take it to the plaster caster I want you to see what I have done, of course, and photograph the relief. I took it to be developed today and will get the slides back next Wednesday. If I knew that you have either a viewer or a slide projector, I would send you the slide, but as I don't

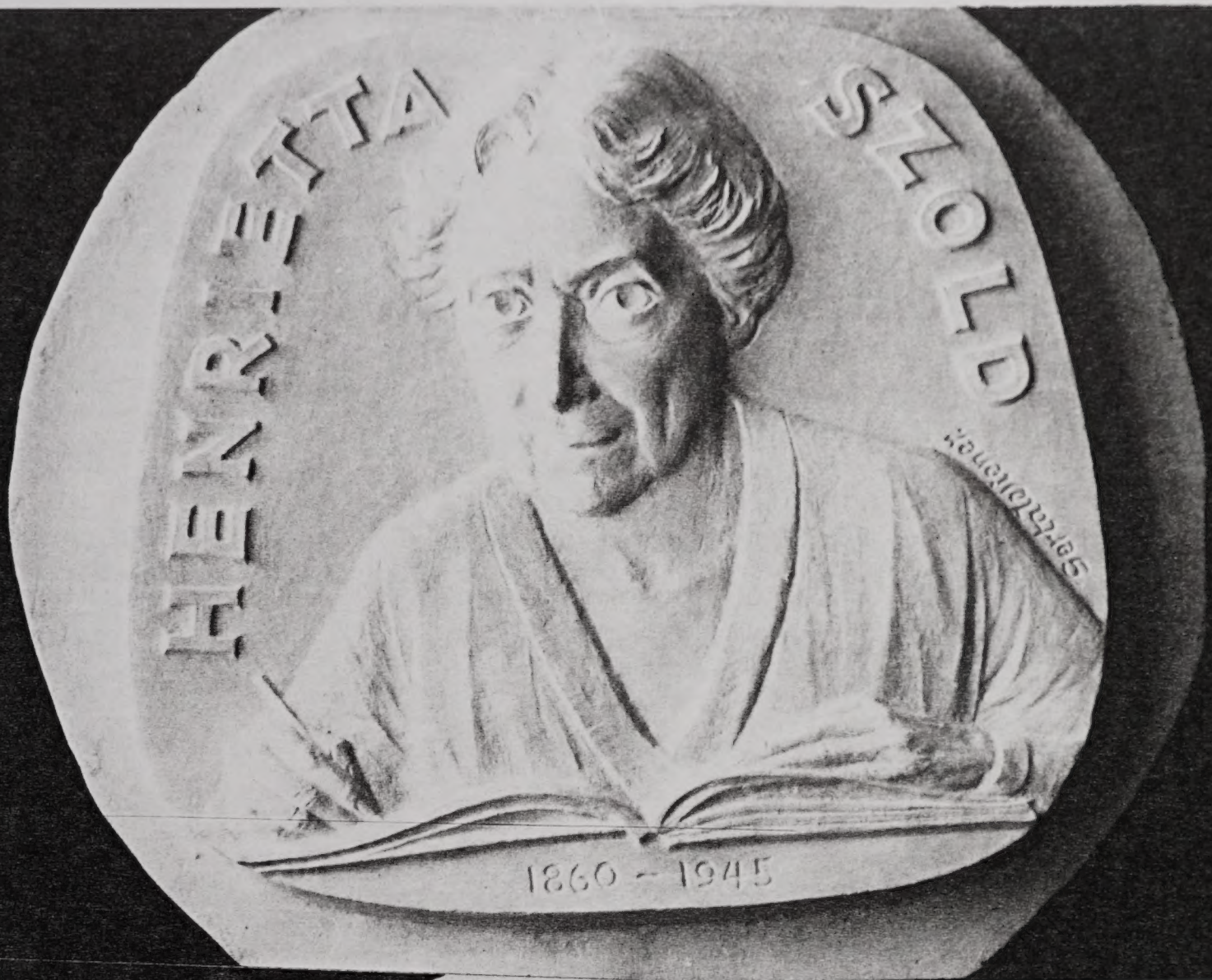
Now I'll have an enlarged print
made for you — If the photos
came out well! I hope ~~it~~ ^{they} will.
But don't use that picture for
any publicity, since the lettering
is still rough. I think you
will like the relief, though
neither you nor I or anyone I
could find really knows how
she looked. On the 5 photographs
"Havassah" lent me, she looks
like 5 different people. I tried
to make a sort of a composite
of the impressions I have from
the photos and knowing what she
has done. While I wait for the
slides to come back I'll start on
the other side of the medal.
I hope that you, Ester, Debbie and
Sharon are well and happy in
your new house. Best regards to
all 4 of you. Gertrude W.

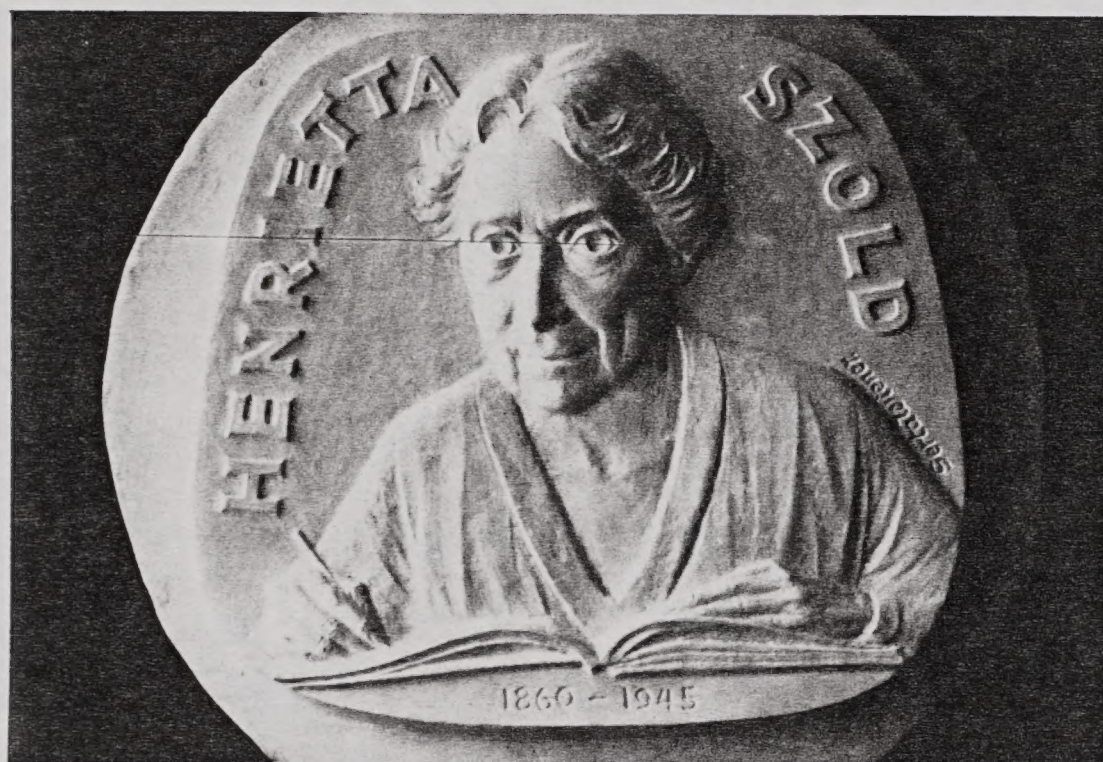
Dec 6, 1975



Dear Mel - here is a photo
of Henrietta's relief. She
looks serious but with a
little smile, as I imagine
she may have looked. As
she was a writer I think
that the book is a good
pouch. The space under
the book will contain
her birth and death dates -
incised. I think it is
going to be an attractive

metal and I hope you
think so too. Now I
shall have it cast in
plaster and in the
meantime work on the
other side. As soon as
I've progressed enough
with that side I'll send
you a photo again. Also
when I finished the
portrait side in plaster.
Wasn't everything much
easier when you lived here.
But I'm glad everybody
is happy in the new home
and environment! Love
a nice Chamukrah and
a very good New Year
Regards to Peter and the
girls. Love,
Gertie.





February 23 76

Dear Mel - I wonder if you
ever received my letter of Jan. 3.
I asked you if I could buy
one bronze medal of old Seixas,
and also included the bill I
paid for having the head
relief (portrait side) cast in
plaster.

Have you moved again -
maybe to South America?
Henrietta is finished and
photographed. I shall send
you a good print as soon
as I get it. You will like
it I'm sure. It is really
better than the 2 other
medals, I think! Now I'm
working on the other side

* and shall send you a photo as soon as it is advanced enough. Please hel, let me hear from you and if it is possible send me 2 bronze Leixas * metals and 1 bronze Brantio! Could you do that as soon as possible, because I want them as ^{birthdays} presents for friends? In the meantime my son has been transferred to California (Los Angeles) and he and his wife are in 7th heaven. Who knows, maybe I'll be there too some day soon! In the meantime stay well. Best regards to Ester, the girls and yourself. Gertrude Wiener

Include the bill, and if it shall be payed at once!

April 5, 1976

Dear Mel — here is a photo of the portrait
side of Henrietta Sold — all finished
to go to Medallie Arts. As you see I
have changed it greatly from the clay
original. You will agree it's better, and
I think it is a good relief.

The other side is not ready to be pho-
tographed, but it's coming along nicely.
It's a bit of a lot of hard work, I
assure you!

I hope that you have found a new
job in the meantime, so that things
in the Marks family have calmed down.

I hope you are all well.

Give my regards to your three ladies.

All the best to you —

Gerta Pies-Wiener

May 3, 1976

- Dear Mel - This day is lost for work, and since I've been arguing with you for hours now, I'd rather put my thoughts on paper and get it off my mind ^{so as} to be able to continue working tomorrow! Yes - I'm so "shock up" after our phone conversation that I'm sure I would mess up the relief if I touched it now. You know I'm not a "temperamental artist" or a rigid person unable or unwilling to listen to other people's suggestions. But to request such a major change in a well thought out, carefully designed composition, one week before completion after months of pains taking work seems incredible to me! I know it's not your idea - you know better - but I'm amazed that you even considered the suggestion! It certainly is not my fault that you didn't know that Habassah had a motto! The motto you gave me is a fine thought and goes well with Loe's activities, and I designed it to fit in just right with the other elements on the medal. To fill in those

3 lines of incised lettering and replace it with others would mean a horrible mess and very much work. That is, I could not possibly get it done before I leave on May 31 and we would have to postpone finishing the medal until I return the middle of July.

To change 2 children into a nurse and a doctor seems so funny to me that it's not worth talking about it! IT'S O.V.T. (See how mad I am?!) I designed and redesigned these children so that each one would be just right in size, line and proportion, and each one would have a character of its own expressed by its gait, the way it holds its head and the ~~the~~ movement of the ^{its} body, as most of them are shown from the back. At the same time they were to form a coherent group, not attracting attention away from Henriette, the main person, whose posture and ~~its~~ place in the design draws your eyes to that motto. This all had to be worked out very carefully as you can imagine (or can't you?) To put a doctor and nurse into this group ~~it~~ and still have a meaningful, artistically good medal would require an entirely new composition — that is, I would have to start all over again. You will understand.

stand that I am not willing to do that
and you would not be willing to pay
for it, I'm sure. I think I made a
good medal that I can show to people
who can judge art, and that you can
feel good about offering it to collectors.
That the Hadassah people look at it from
an entirely different point of view is
understandable. But a medal is not
an advertising item. People who know
Henrietta Gold and Hadassah know
what they stand for — those who don't
won't be interested in anything but the
fact that it's another piece in a series
of medals. Hadassah has a medal showing
their new hospital (see "Shekel" Vol. VIII No. 5,
and possibly others for other activities.
That people will find the portrait not
to be a good likeness is also under-
standable — but looking at the
statue someone made of her which
I saw in the lobby of the Hadassah
office building, I think mine resembles
the photos I had more than that
artist's work, who also never saw her.
And the next generation will not be able

So tell, Who knows how George Washington
really looked? We formed ~~his~~ ^{our} image of him
from the artist's conception of him!
Right? So I'm not worried about that.
You never can satisfy different people as
far as a portrait goes — especially if you
never saw the person portrayed. And work-
for "community's" is the worst, because every-
one feels obliged to give an opinion, no
matter how nonsensical.

So — the only compromise I'm willing
to make is to add 3 or 4 (at most)
Hebrew words. I think I can manage
that without spoiling the entire
composition and without needing too
much more time. I just took a photo
of the medal as it is now with my
small camera, which I'll send you as
soon as I can get it developed & printed.
The professional one will follow.
Now I've gotten rid of some of my
fury and will take this letter to
the postoffice a walk I'll enjoy after
a week of work without stopping for
anything! I enclose the bill for the car.
Best regards to you, Ester and the girls.
Ged

Friday, May 7, 1976

Dear Mel - just now I received your letter with the Hebrew motto. Thank you very much. I was much relieved to see that it's short, and I will be able to fit it in nicely without it looking like an afterthought. I expect the photographer tomorrow or Sunday, and so I'll work very hard to get the lettering done before she comes. Then I can call you as you say "folks" and ask them when it would be convenient for them to take the 2 plaques to Connecticut. I am very grateful to them and to you that it could be arranged that way. I am really sorry that you couldn't see the originals yourself, but I'm sure you will be happy with the medal. I only hope that Medallie Art isn't getting

slippy about their work. When my son
was here a few weeks ago I gave him
one of the Seixas medals you sent me
and he pointed out to me that those
3 medals you sent me were much
less sharp than the first one you sent
me, that the dark "antiquing" around
the deep contours was very weak and
almost missing on one of them (which
makes the modeling less effective)
and that there are all kinds of flaws,
for instance a hand which is completely
scatched off! Did you notice that? Does
that always happen at the "end of the run"?
It would be good too to emphasize
that they should not use the light
color they put on the Seixas medal
but rather the color they used for
the Brandeis one. Don't you agree?
Well — let's hope Herbasch will give
you a nice order for the medal despite
the missing nose and doctor! —
The best to you and your family
I'll drop you a card from my vacation.

Gertrude.

August 29, 1976

Dear Mel,

it was very nice of you to show me the 1. sample of my Szold medal that you received from the Medallie Arts Co.

You must have noticed that I did not like what I saw, and I know that you agree with me. As it is unlikely that the flaws I object to will be less noticeable once the medals are being struck in quantity, I do hope that something can be done to improve some of the more glaring imperfections.

As you know, Medallie Arts made two plaster-of-paris frames for me when I started the first medal for the Jewish Hall of Fame series, so that I could model my reliefs inside these frames, and there would be no difficulty in fitting the back and front sides of the non-circular shape used in this series. I used these very frames for the Szold medal. So WHY did they have to add a piece to the bottom? And if, for some incomprehensible reason a piece had to be added, why not ask me to do it? I wonder if it is permissible to change the signed design of an artist without consulting him! The alteration made on this medal is so poorly executed that it will damage my reputation as an artist if it goes out like this. What can I or you do about it? Let me know, please. Soon!

Best regards to you and your family

Gertrude Riech Weiser

September 4, 76

Dear Mel - To make it more
"momieslike" and to have
a copy to send to Medallic
Arts, I typed the enclosed
letter to you. It took me
 $\frac{1}{2}$ day and it still looks
pretty awful, but it will do.
I left out a lot of things
I really wanted to say, but
in view of the fact that
you still have to deal
with them I thought it
better to go short. I wonder
if they will answer me or
what they will answer you!
You trip home probably

was nice and restful, and
now you are glad to be
back home. Right? Or not?
I hope you can find some
really good pictures of Salla
Heir. I have one good one
in a book: Who is who in
Danish History (by Joan Conway
publ. David McKay) which you
probably have. But how and
where could I see medals of
her that have been made?
I wouldn't want to make
one inadvertently looking
like someone else's. Right?
And please don't forget to
get me a plaster cast of
the Henriette Lund head if
that is possible. Thanks in
advance. Best regards, Gertrude.

GOLDA MEIR



October 8 76

Dear Mel — Hi! I know
you just have to write —
but you'll have to tell
me if you have been able
to find a motto or a
quotation or even an idea
for the reverse of the Golda
Meir medal. I haven't!

I also asked you where I
could see medals or coins of
Golda Meir that have been
done — at least photos
of them, because I wouldn't
want to repeat, ~~etc~~ ^{etc} ~~me~~
Runningly, something done
before. I found one good
photo of her, but may be

able to find others.

Metellie Est's Miss Carol Cipos
answered my letter, saying that
NOTHING had been changed on
my design, and that you should
have shown me the proof before
before you gave the O.K. She
is right, of course. But I sent
her a photo of the plaster
original which should show her
(if she doesn't know it herself)
that something was added to the
bottom.

Please, Mel, don't forget to re-
turn the print I gave you of
the reverse of the Gold Medal!
I hope everything is fine with
you and your family.
Sleeping to hear from you soon,
I send you my best regards,
Berka.

October 19, 1976
Dear Mel, Thank you very much
for the 2 letters you sent me -
the one with the folders about
the Henrietta Told me and the
photo I had sent you, and the
other letter with the portion of
the Golda Meir biography. The
quotation about "the courage to
dream great dreams" appeals to
me very much. The theme of
friendship between Israel, Arabs
and Africans is excellent too, but
it is a bit risky. You can't
pick out certain ones and leave
out others. Right?
Thank you also for the address
of Mrs. Marie Syrkin whom I
shall contact if I can't find the
right photos.
In the meantime a nephew - in-
law of mine has been here on a

visit from Israel. He left to go back yesterday, and promised to call up Golda Meir as soon as he arrives and ask her if she had a photo she would like me to use, and a motto or quotation she would like to see on the reverse. If he doesn't forget to call her, and if she responds, my problem would be solved! Let's hope it will work out.

About Viki and his Torero Syna, Zagre medal I can't tell you anything. I know that his eyes are giving him much trouble, so his work probably is slowed down because of that. Before I forget - I wanted

2.
To ask you why you haven't
used the photos of Henrietta
Isolt (which I had sent you ~~on~~
on that folder) It is difficult to
photograph reliefs and I had
very carefully supervised the
photographer so the lighting
would be right, and I picked
the best ones from the many
shots the photographer took,
so details and highlights
would show up well. The photos
you used on the ~~photos~~ ^{folder} you
must have had taken from
the awful sample model
you showed me, by a pho-
tographer who overemphasized
the highlights (or, worse, re-
touched them badly) in some

places, and discriminated them
in the lettering. Those pictures
make Henrietta look bloated
and swollen and give her an
entirely different expression.
Not to mention the fact that
the details are blurred on both
sides. Mel - honestly - I am
pretty disgusted about all
this. After months of hard
work trying to create a fine
medal, and succeeding, it is
all handled so carelessly and
without understanding.

You asked me if I want one
silver and 1 bronze or 2 bronze
ones. I'd like 3 bronze ones. O.K.?
Best regards to you, Ester and
the girls. Peter.

Oct. 20. 76

Dear Mel — you'll be
surprised to get another
letter from me, won't you?
But I thought you would
be as pleased as I am to
hear that Golda Meir
has sent me 3 good photos
of herself — selected as
ones she likes! I don't
know if I wrote you that
a nephew of mine with
his wife and granddaughter
were here on a visit from
Israel. I told them about
the medal I was to do of
Golda and that I hoped to
find a good picture of her
to work from. So the young

Can we, from now on, - all of us - turn a new leaf and, instead of fighting with each other, can we all, united, fight poverty and disease and illiteracy?

In our present situation I could not refuse to do what was asked of me.

Our hand is offered to you in peace and friendship.

Sound the great trumpet for our freedom, raise the banner for gathering our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth into our land.

Substitute cooperation between Israel and her neighbors for sterile hatred and ardor for destruction, and give life and hope and happiness to all its people.

I believe that the first thing that is necessary for people in the world is the courage to dream great dreams, and then the reality to face difficulties in order to accomplish and make those dreams come true.

It isn't enough to believe in something. you have to have the stamina to meet obstacles and overcome them.

*this I like best. If
space allows
all of it!* →

*These sayings
could apply
equally to
the Arabs and
their hopes
and therefore
they may not
be suitable!*

*Dear Mel - Thanks for your note and for
having sent the medals. They haven't
arrived yet. No Golda their sent no letter
with the photos just: "With the compliments of
Mrs. Golda their" typed. I'm sure her secretary
sent the photos. I've read 4 books on Golda and printed some
things she said in speeches that I feel would be fine for*

November 14, 76

Dear Mel - Thanks for your letter and the 3 medals. I still think they are no good. Aside from the fact that the top was cut off - misplacing the "Henrietta Bold" which was exactly parallel to the outline of the medal - and the badly finished addition at the bottom, making the dates much too small and high up under the book - the color is much too light, there is too little darker shading and too much buffing. Just put the 3 medals - Brandeis, Leixas and Lord next to each other and you must see how they get progressively lighter in color, shinier and deeper looking.

But I guess they'll look O.K.
to people who don't know
how much better they could
have looked. Which is no
consolation to me. —

Thanks for the interesting
pamphlet on Hadasah. —
I found another possible
quote from a speech by Soler:
"Zionism and Pessimism
are not compatible."

As for the photos on your
table. DID my good photos
really get lost, or did you only
think so. I know that photo-
graphing sculpture is a special
art which few professional
photographers master. The
sculptor has to supervise their
lighting. Which I always do.
I hope you forgive me for my
causing you to have to write
so much - Mel! The best to
you and your family. Love,

December 1776

Dear Mel - you probably wondered
why I haven't responded to your
suggestion to change one word
in one of the quotations I had
mentioned, ^{for the reverse of the error their quodae} and use only the 2nd
part of the sentence - Alas!
"Let all of us united fight
poverty, disease and illiteracy"
I think it's O.K., but I don't
know if one can change quo-
tations - even if it's only
one word! Is it permissible?
Since the person who uttered
those words is still alive I
wonder if she, Golda, would
agree to it?
But there really is no hurry.
I may still find another
possibility, and for now I'm

still busy with the other side
of the medal. In fact I'm
finished with the clay and,
to prevent its cracking, I'll
have it cast in plaster the
week after next and then
finish it in plaster. I'll try
to take a good photo of the
clay and send it to you. I
think you'll like it. People who
saw it think it's a very good
likeness.

How is the sold medal selling?
I still don't like it!

Have a nice Chanukah and
a very good New Year.

Best regards to you, Foster
and the girls.

Gertrude.

January 12, 1977

Dear Mel — I worked on Golda's portrait as long as I could without the clay starting to crack. The steam heat causes that to happen sooner than necessary. So I had it cast in plaster and am going on with the work now. I am leaving the name off for the time being, because I want to use Golda's signature instead of raised printed letters. I thought it looked very well on the Lexan metal, and will on aluminum too I'm sure. But I was not able to get the signature from anyone, including the Israeli consulate. They all told me they were not authorized to give it to anyone, which is understandable. So — I am going

Now is there a possibility of a lost the plasterwork, or didn't they like it?

to go to Israel and ask Golda
for it myself! And also ask her
what motto, quote or whatever
she would like to have on the
reverse of the medal!

Now what do you say — have
any one of your artists ever
gone as far as that to assure
the excellence of a medal?! I
plan to go for 3 weeks in March.
As was to be expected, the
plaster cast costs more than last
year and I hope you can send
me the \$27 — I laid out for it
soon. I enclose the bill.

We now have the usual snow,
gale, freeze, thaw, snow,
round that we always get in
winter in New York, and it is
as hard to take as it always is.

Enjoy your warm climate and
everything else that's yours.
A happy healthy New Year to you and
your ladies! Best.


February 1, 1977

Dear Mel - Thank you for your
note of January 26. with
the check.

Yes - I also am excited about
my trip to Israel, and I do
hope that Golda will be able
(and willing!) to see me. If
she is, Mel, I certainly do
not want to barge in there
with a photographer, looking
like a publicity hound! If
a relative with a camera can
come along and snap me unob-
trusively, O.K. - - O.K.?! -
No, the Gold medal is not
perfect, so I won't give her one.
Best wishes to you and the family.
Guspa.

February 25, 77

Dear Ned - here at last you
have the photo of my Golda
Meir relief as it is now. I
want to put her signature -
incised like the Leixas one -
on the sides of the face,
and hope she will give it to
me. So far I have no idea
if I will get to see her! Of
course I'm taking another
print to show her. It was a
hassle to get it done! My
friend, the photographer, had
no time, so I had to borrow
her camera and tripod and
take the pictures myself -.
With a strange camera that was

risky, but I got some good shots
as you see. Don't worry about
the  frame - it isn't crooked.
I must not have lined up the
camera exactly parallel to the
relief, that's how the distortion
came about - but as the portrait
itself is modeled quite shallow
it didn't affect it. I think it
won't have such exaggerated high
lights in the finished medal as
the Henrietta took had because of
the shallower modeling. Better!
I'm leaving on Monday, the 28th.
I'll write you from Israel, and
I hope you like the photo - or,
rather, the portrait. I do think
it is good.
The best to you, Foster, the girls.
Gerta.



UNFINISHED RELIEF
FOR GOLDA MEIR MEDAL

Sara Riss-Winner
February 1977

Jerusalem, March 15, 77
 Dear Mel - my mission in
 Israel is up some of
 was wonderful, interesting
 cold and crowded with things
 to do and see. But I could
 not see Golda, only her friend
 and secretary, who had no
 suggestion for the reverse
 side of the medal, but said:
 "That's up to you." But she will
 send me her signature. So
 that's something. I'll start
 working on it as soon as I get
 back. I hope
 you and your
 family are well. Best regards,
 Berta

ירושלים - שוק העיר העתיקה
 Jerusalem, Old City Bazaar.
 Jérusalem, Le marché de la vieille ville.



Air Mail

Mr. Mel Wachs
 5189 Jeffdale
 Woodland Hills
 California 91364
 U.S.A.



March 28, 77.

Dear Mel, just a few lines to
tell you that I'm back and
that I had a wonderful trip.
Golda had a sister from U.S.A.
visiting her and couldn't see
me, but I saw her friend and
secretary Lou Kader, who said
they leave the decision about
what goes on the reverse side
to me. But she promised to
get me Golda's signature, and
it was in my mail this
morning. So I can now
finish the portrait side.
Did you get the photo I
sent you? And did you like
it? Everyone in Israel to
whom I showed it seemed to

Think that it is a good likeness.
How is the Henrietta I sold
medal selling? I went to the
Madrasah hospital to see if
there was a picture, statue or
photograph of her there, but
they didn't have a thing.
It was very cold during my
stay in Israel and I hoped
for warmer weather when I'd
come back here. Well - today,
at last, it felt like spring.
I hope you, Esther and the
girls are very well.

Best regards,
Gerta.

April 9, 1977.

Dear Mel, That's nice that you'll
be here on the 28th and we
can talk things over in person.
I'm glad you told me about
your wanting the birth date and
the "in honor of her 80 birthday"
on the medal now, before I star-
ted to put her name on! I agree
with you that the addition
is essential and with some
change in the design I'll be
able to include it without
spoiling the medal. In fact, it
will improve it, and emphasize
the face.



I already
"faded out"
the shoulders,
but shall wait with putting
in the lettering until you come.
But I don't have her full birth

date, only 1898 (which is mine too!) So
you happen to have the day and month.
And please bring along the sketch
I made of the reverse - with the
different types on it. I don't seem
to have made a copy for myself.
Now, that they expressly "left it
to me" to choose a quotation for
the reverse, I don't feel so unsure
about what to put on. Now, if
they don't like it, I can always
say: "I gave you a chance to pick
what you want, but you left it to
me!" But I'm sure they won't
care one way or the other! Golda
has other things to think of!

See you soon -
Best regards to the family
and to yourself

Shirley.

June 6, 1977

Dear Mel - just a quick
note to tell you that
tomorrow I'll have the
reverse of the Golda Meir
medal cast, and in a
week I hope it will be
finished and ready to
be photographed.
Will you please write
me the address of the
foundry you are going
to use this time, and
particularly the person
who will be responsible.
I DO hope it will be
done well, because it will

be an important medal
which you probably will be
able to sell very well indeed.
And as far as I am concerned
I think I have succeeded in
making an artistically good
medal. You know I don't say
that easily - and I would
be very much disappointed
if it would be spoiled in the
reproduction. I certainly want
to see a proof piece before
it is O.K. & this time! And
Mel, please tell me what
you are going to pay for
it - considering inflation.
I'll send you the photos as
soon as I have them.
Best regards to all the Wackses.

Gerda.

July 6. 1977

Dear Ned - by now I'm sure you are back from your vacation, and I hope that it has been wonderful.

Here are the photos of the Golda Meir medal. I had the pictures enlarged on glossy paper so you could use them for your publicity. The photos are a bit too ^{contrasty} and the captured originals are not as harsh - they are much softer and rather shallow. Better than the pictures make them appear. But you'll get the idea.

I'm enclosing also the bill
for the plaster casting of
the reverse.

I do hope you will let
me know SOON where
the plaster originals are
to go, and to whom I
would have to talk. I
wish to have the things out
of the house as quickly as
possible now that they are
finished.

The fee is O.K. and I'm
looking forward to that
check, plus the \$27- for the cast.
Give my best regards to
your family. The best to you,
Gertie.

August 2, 1977

Dear Mel - yesterday I sent
you a letter asking why I
didn't hear from you —
Today your letter and the
check arrived. Thank you
very much for both and
for the address. I am
very uneasy about sending
the originals by Parcel
Post, since I haven't the
material or know how
to pack them properly.
I will try to get in touch
with Mr. Menkes.

I'm sorry, Mel, I don't agree
with your suggestion to extend
the the right shoulder line beyond
the G. It would do nothing to
"balance" it against the left
shoulder, but would press down
on the name - which is the
last thing that should be
done! The photo does not really
show how far the line does go,
and you can't trust me - it
is right the way it is -
believe me, it has all been
weighed and considered very
carefully.

Best regards to you, Ester and
the girls.

Gertrude R. V.

January 3, 1982

Dear Mel - yesterday I had a visit from a niece from Tel Aviv, who knew that I had done the Golda Meir medal. She told me that she knows Golda's family very well and had asked her son whether he has the medal. He told her that none of the family has it or even knows of its existing. My niece asked me if it was not possible to send Golda's son one of the medals if it is still available, and I promised her that I would ask you. Don't you think

That Golda's son should have
one? The address is:

Menachim Meir
Ramat Aviv
Baron Hirsch Street 8
ISRAEL

I hope you jumped happily
out of the old, miserable year
and into the, as we all wish,
much better 1982.

Right now the weather here in
Berkeley is atrocious, raining
cats and dogs for days on end -
stormy and cold as I never
experienced it in California.
I hope it's better where you
are, and that you all are well.

The very best for you,
Ester, Debbie and Sharon,

P.S. I miss Isaac Stern! Geta.

REBECCA GRATZ



June 20, 78

Dear Ned - my postcard and
your letter must have met
on the way - they were
written on the same day!
Telepathy, I would say.
Also that I had picked the
very same paintings of
Rebecca Grek as you did -
the one with the hat - as
a nice portrait for the medal.
I'm so glad that we agree
on this, it will be a very
different looking medal for
a change - lighter in mood
than the others. And good.
That you found old Rabbi
Lasser and his Jewish catechism
that he dedicated to Rebecca
is a stroke of genius on
your part. If you can get

hold of it and find a usable
quotation that would be just
perfect. Maybe you also could
get a good, not too small
reproduction of the painting
with the hat for me to work
from. Until I have Alvin and
the quotation I naturally
can't make any sketches!
Besides - I still have not the
slightest idea when I will be
moving to Berkeley, and am
sitting in a half packed up
apartment waiting. Not very
comfortable, I assure you.
I'm eagerly looking forward
to the Golda medals (3) and
hope they'll arrive S.O.O.N.
Did you send one to Golda?
I wonder how she likes it!
Have a very good summer,
Mel, and take my best greetings
for you, Esther and the girls.
Baba.

June 27, 1978

Dear Mel - when I came home from a long weekend Sunday night I found the envelope with the Golda Meir in my mailbox.

Thank you for sending it. It is very nice and I am much relieved as you can imagine. I hope you can send the 2 others soon, and that they will be equally good.

Great that your entire production has been sold and you have no record. But then your statement that the edition is "strictly limited to . . . etc. etc." is

not have any more, does
that matter?

Anyway, I'm happy that
the medal is a success.

No other medal probably
can be as popular as this
one — but I'll try to
make the new one as
appealing — at least ar-
tistically!

So far there was no word
from Berkeley, and I am
still sitting on my boxes
waiting!

Keep well, busy and happy.
The best to you and your
family. Gertrude.

October 16, 1978

Dear Mel - Thanks for your letter.
It's unbelievable that you again
have difficulties with the foundry
you chose! What are you doing about
all the orders you got for that
medal?! I for my part have asked
Viki to buy me a Golda Meir bronze
medal at the Museum for the
price you would have charged me,
(\$9.50) so I at least can send my
brother in London the birthday
present I had promised him in

May!! I sent it off today.
I have been at the Nazes Museum
library, where I found no other
picture of Rebecca Brak than the
ones I had seen before. I had
some excellent Xeroxes made of the

one with the hat, which I liked best
and will start working on it. I shall
try to get hold ^{of} and read Rebecca
Gratz's letters, and may be able to
find something she said to put
on the reverse. The quotes you
have ^(given me) seem so general, so me-
anyone could have said it.

But what's the sense of making
more medals if you seem unable
to find a satisfactory foundry?
Isn't there really one in the West
in Los Angeles maybe, so you can
control what they do, and it is
easier to communicate with
them than foundries in Connecticut?
Do try to find out.

I return your good wishes for the
New Year and hope that you and
your family are very well.
The best to you, Gerda.

January 25, 79.

Dear Mel I just want
you to know that I'm
getting along nicely with
Rebecca G. Although her letters
have not yielded a single
quotable remark - and not
even a usable signature!

She signed either R. Gratz or
R.G. - People keep asking me
how Golda Meir liked my mother
and I always have to say that
I don't know if she got one.

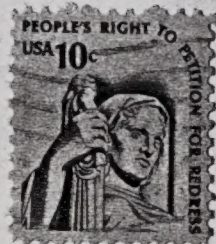
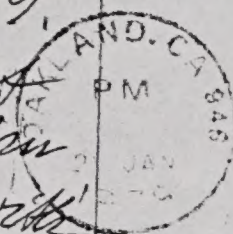
Did she? I hope you and the

Edelweiss

This Queen of mountain flowers reflects all the majestic grandeur
of the Swiss Alps in its velvety beauty.

Original drawing by Pia Rothardt.

Printed in Switzerland



Mr,

Mel Wachs
5189 Jeffers Ave.
Woodland Hills
Cal. 91364

February 26, 1979

Dear Mel - I won't keep you on ten-
deckbooks any longer, and am sending
you rough sketches of how the Re-
becca Gratz Medal will look.

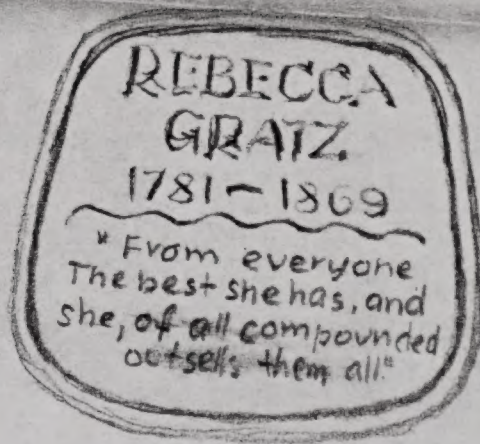
The Portrait side is almost ready
to be cast in plaster. You will
like it - after all the sedate ladies
and gentlemen on the other medals
it is something lighter and pleasant
to look at. Since Rebecca never, it
seems, signed her full name, but
either R. G. or R. Gratz I am using
the signature shown of the facsimile
of one of her letters in the book of
her letters.

At the end of the introduction to
the same book: The letters of Rebecca
Gratz by Rabbi David Philpott, I
also found the quotation of Shakespeare
which describes her personality ad-
mirably, as the author of the intro-
duction thought so. After much

thought and experimentation with more elaborate designs on the back, I decided that this simple inscription would be a welcome change after the crowds of people decorating the reverse of my last 3 medals. And since there are so many activities Rebecca engaged in and she possessed so many virtues it ~~was~~ impossible to describe her character better than that quotation does.

Besides, with the difficulties you are having with mints I think it advisable to try out the new one you have in mind with a not too detailed and complicated relief.

You are, dear Mel, the worst correspondent ever. I asked you if we could use the portrait without permission from someone. I also wanted to know if you ever sent a medal to Zoltan. Well — that's all for today — I'm very busy. I hope you are O.K. Best regards to all the Waxes.
Gerta.



S.R.V.

September 11, 1979

Dear Mel - Rebecca Grak, back and front, are finished and waiting for you!

If I may say so myself, it will be a beautiful medal - provided the foundry doesn't mess it up.

Don't say SEND IT, because I don't want to do that. The plaster is extremely soft, and I hate to think of Rebecca with a big scratch across her face or worse.

I hope you, Foster and the girls don't suffer because of the heat, the smog and the earthquakes. Best regards to all of you.

Gerta.

September 20, 1979

Dear Mel -
Thank you for your letter. I am,
of course, disappointed that you
won't come to take away and
look at Rebecca, but I realise
that it's a long trip and you
probably can't take the time
off.

I am trying to find some-
one to take good pictures of the
medal, as I have neither my
good camera I used to have
any more, nor the friend who
sometimes took pictures for me.
But as soon as I get the photos
made I'll send them to you,
so you'll be able to get rid
of your check!!

Now that you write that 1981

will be Rebecca's Bicentennial.
I feel much better about having
taken so much time with this
medal. You'll have a good reason
to issue it in 1981 only. Thank
goodness I won't have to worry
this time if it will get to her
for her birthday!!!
You ask if I want to tackle
another assignment. ^{How} ~~If~~ you any-
one in mind? I would like a
respite before I start another
medal to finish a rather big
job of writing and illustrating,
which takes a lot of concentrating.
But aside from that let me
know whom you want on another
medal. For a change I'd prefer
a male — and — in profile!
All those female $\frac{3}{4}$ views become
monotonous! O.K.?
The very best to you and your
family for the Holidays!
Regards and good wishes.
Berta.

October 6, 1979.

Dear Mel — finally I got someone to take photos of the Rebecca Greek Medal. They are not perfect, but I'm sure you will be able to visualize the medal from them if you consider that they are not quite sharp and, as you can see by the shape of the frames, slightly distorted.

The photos are about the size the medal will be, so you can see that the text will be easy to read.

If you need larger prints I can have them made.

While I worked on the face I never was quite satisfied with the likeness when I compared it with the photo of the painting. Then, for fun, I painted

The eyes, hair and mouth of the clay original which was still quite intact, and, to our behoof, with the hair and eyes dark it suddenly was Rebecca of the painting! What a difference coloring makes! When you see the plaster casts don't be surprised that the reverse of the face side has sprouted hair! The plaster caster for some strange reason reinforced the cast with hemp! That gave me a terrible time working on it, because the fibers kept coming through and I had to dig them out and fill in the little cracks constantly. The hemp apparently also yellowed the plaster slightly in spots — mainly the face, but that makes no difference anyway, when it came to casting.

2.

The reverse of the medal I told him not to "reinforce" it again - it doesn't need it! That way it was not only much easier to finish the lettering but the cast is much lighter than the "reinforced" one. Now I wonder who is going to pack and send it, and where to.

When you are ready to have the foundry decide on the finish, PLEASE let me see a sample of the color!

It decidedly should not have the dull and muzzed looking finish of the Levi medal you showed me, but should be lighter and have shiny high lights, to go with the style

of this medal. I'm sure you agree.

I hope that now, that the heat and smog have diminished you feel much better. Here it has been lovely all along, and I continue to enjoy my mini apartment. It is so compact that the upkeep is easy and I have more time - if not more space - for work.

Keep well and give my regards to your family.

Best regards to you - and belated good wishes for the holidays for all of you.

Gerta.



January 12, 1980

Dear Mel - how have you and your family survived all the celebrating of the past month?

I am sure you enjoyed all of it and everybody is back at their jobs and studies now.

I wonder how the plaster casts arrived! I hope not damaged. The box was quite tight, so I thought it to be safe, but for mail trans- portation I wouldn't have chosen it. How did you like Rebecca? When the time comes for the family to take over I would like very much to help decide

the color and finish. Will
you let me see samples?
This medal should be lighter
and brighter than the one
for Mr. Levi - don't you
think so? But there is lots
of time to think about that
and I hope you will come to
Berkeley some time to talk
about it and the Deifetz
medal. Did you find good
photos? I'm still working
on my illustrations and
have a great time with them.
The best to you and your
3 babies for a healthy, happy
1980.

Fondly, Gerta.

February 11, 1980

Dear Mel — are you sick,
traveling, or just busy!
I hope it's for no other
reason that I haven't
heard from you if the
originals for ^{the} Rebecca Gratz
medal reached you intact!
I'm beginning to see
them broken, scratched,
lost — and I don't like
the idea.

So please take a load off
my mind!

A belated "Happy New Year"
to you and your family.

Gene.

Lexington, Ky.
Feb. 27, 1981

The Maggs Museum

Gentlemen,

It was with great personal interest that I read the enclosed article in the New York Times.

For many years Miss Henrietta Clay, the last grandchild of Benjamin Gray, was my dear friend. Among many beautiful and wonderful things that she had were Sully portraits of Rebecca Gray and of her younger brother Benjamin. During Miss. Clay's last illness in 1974 I, as her power-of-attorney, delivered these portraits and many other magnificent things to representatives of the Rosenbach Foundation. I was told at that time that Sully had painted four portraits

of Rebecca. ⁻²⁻ The one at Rosenbach,
one in Canada, one in New Orleans
(I think) and the location of the
fourth was unknown. I should
like to know which, if any, of
these were used by Mrs.
Wiener in fashioning the medallion.
also, I gave to Temple Adair
Israel in Lexington, Ky. Two
sauceurs and two cake plates which
had belonged to Marian Simon
Gutz, wife of Michael Gutz.
These are serous and the cake
plates are monogrammed with
"S." They are highly prized.
The remainder of the chocolate
service is at the Rosenbach
in Philadelphia.

I, myself, received a mint
condition eleven inch Rose Medallion
bowl which was brought from
China by Michael Gutz and a
pair of Lawstoft chinaware

tanzards, quite old & beautiful.

The remainder of Miss Clay's effects were sold to the Kentucky State Museum at Frankfort and mostly to the Kentucky Mansions Preservation for the restoration of the home of Robert S. Todd in Lexington. Mr. Todd was the father of Mary Todd Lincoln. These things are intact and may be seen by the public.

Incidentally, Miss Clay's mother, Anna Gratz Clay, gave the letters of Rebecca Gratz to the Lexington family to the Hebrew Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. They were published by Rabbi Philipson. Mrs. Clay died in 1930.

Also, I gave many papers and books of the Gray family to Transylvania University, Lexington, Ky. Mr. Benjamin Gray was for many years a trustee of this school founded in 1780.

I should greatly appreciate some information concerning this medallion.

Sincerely,

H. P. Bacon

H. P. BACON

334 HAMPTON COURT
LEXINGTON, KY. 40508

JASCHA HEIFETZ



Sunday, April 13, 1980

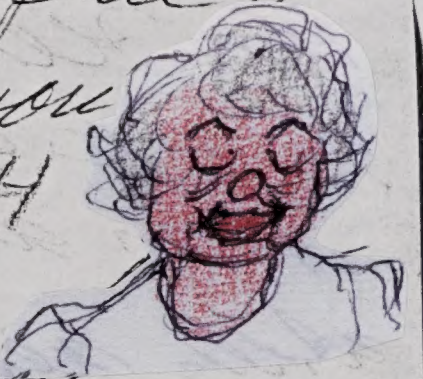
Dear Mel - before I start anything
else I want to thank you very
much for the Heifetz book and
the "Shekel" magazine. ^{and your letter} Both ar-
rived yesterday. First of all I

must tell you that you
made me B-L-U-S-H

because of all the

flattering things you
said about me in your article
though I could not quite see
why you had to give away
my age, you villain! But I'll
forgive you, as nobody cares
anyway.

Right now I do feel ancient,
forced to a slow motion life
because I fell 2 weeks ago
on the street and broke my
wrist. Fortunately the left



one, but the cast must weigh a
ton — and what can one do
with one hand anyway. — Well
in 6 weeks the damned thing
will be off and I can become
active again. I looked through
the Fleisetz book and find to
my regret that, great as he
is as an artist — I unfortunately
never heard him — he is
not much to look at! His
face is, as I see it, not only
uninteresting, but un-
pleasant in expression. But
one has to find a view which
shows him to advantage, and
there are several pictures that
do. Is there any rule that
the people honored by a
medal have to be shown
as they looked at the end
of their lives? I don't think

2. so. Brando's, Seixas, Rebecca's
are all shown long before they
were old. Since Keifetz was al-
ready famous as a child I don't
think it would be wrong to
show him as a young man.
There is a very nice photo of
him on page 268 of 1925 which
is excellent as a composition
for the medal ^(if a bit too pretty!) and an equally
good one and not that young,
of 1951 on page 153. The
latter has a blurred handker
that, of course, I can do from
another photo or have some
one pose for me. This photo
also has a certain rhythmic
movement which would make
the portrait interesting, and
the face is not a flebby as
in your choice on page 457. (1965)
Another good one ^{on} page 431 (1940)

I'm sure that with all those pictures
I can get an appealing portrait
and a good medal. Your idea
for the reverse is fine - but
can you simply copy part of
what is shown on page 278 -
music and autograph without
special permission? Especially
as we wouldn't want all of what
is shown but only part of it!
Mr. Keifetz might not like it -
and he doesn't look like a
person who would take kindly
to what he'd consider a desec.
pass on his rights! Hope sure,
he'll will you?

And how are you going to get
this medal out on time for
his 80th birthday in February
1981? You know how long
it takes for me to finish
the original ^(plaster models) and the foundry

3. To produce the medal! My
Gilda's original plaster was
finished in plenty of time, and
still the medal was not done
in time for the 80th birthday!
You know all the unforeseen
delays. I feel it would be better
not to put the dedication on
the medal, so if it comes out
a year later it won't matter.
I think it over.

Looking at all the medals you
show in your article I still
feel that the Selman ~~portrait~~
is no good — it jumps out at
you unpleasantly. The Einstein
and the Gershwin ones are by
far the best I think. They
are simple, strong and beautiful.
I'm very curious to see how
my "privolous" Rebecca will
look. Have you taken any

action on her behalf? And
I suddenly realized that you
have all kinds of outstanding
personalities in your series -
even a manufacturer (Levi)
but no painter or sculptor!
Are there no Jewish-American
painters or sculptors of fame?
I have to do some research!

I'm glad everything is
O.K. in your family, and
I hope it stays that way,
as I can do almost no work
as long as I have that oily
cass on I'll go to visit my
children for a week or so.
I still hope you'll come to
Berkeley one of these days
so we can chat about a lot
of things. Give my very best
regards to you 3 sweet ladies.
Keep well and happy. Gerta.

ISAAC STERN



July 9, 1980

* I was mistaken, assuming that it was a Valentine's concert!

Dear Mel - This ancient sketch of Carnegie Hall audiences* - without any Carnegie Hall showing, can not mean much to you, except the fact that it was made before you were born! Looking at it I found that the fashion hasn't changed THAT much - I see people dressed like that any day walking around Berkeley!! Tonight there will be a T.V. program on Ch. 9 in which Isaac Stern will appear, and I intend to take a look at him.

It was nice to see you, Ester and the girls again.

Best regards to all of you.

Gene.

Heard as They Waited to See Isadora Duncan

By Hugh O'Connor.

(Illustrated with a sketch by Gertrude Ries.)

It was a buzzing crowd that stirred about in front of Carnegie Hall and in the lobby, coming to see Isadora Duncan's reappearance in America. In the air of excited expectancy all the historic Duncan scandals and shocks bloomed again and were watered with a few up-to-date attentions. For instance:

"She's as well known in Europe now as Charlie Chaplin is here—to the chambermaids as well as to the aristocracy."

"I hear she went to Russia and came back disillusioned within a year."

"Yes, she had to marry that young poet, Essénine, before they'd let her take him out of Russia. She was furious."

"They say he's a peasant-poet, but I think he looks like a lounge lizard. I saw a photograph of him."

"She made a speech once from the stage at the Metropolitan Opera House and told the golden horseshoe she would live to see the day when their heads would be on one side of Fifth Avenue and their bodies on the other, with



a river of blood between."

"She says she's thirty-eight, but I know she's forty-three. She's been dancing in public since 1898."

"She went to the opera in Athens in a classical Athenian costume, but the Athenians didn't know what it was, so they hissed her and made a riot."

"I read in the papers that it was

her first legal marriage."

"Gordon Craig * * * yes * * * two children, who were killed in an accident in 1913 in Paris * * * gave her a cha-teau."

"In 1911, they say, she did the Bacchanale from Tannhaeuser in this very hall and wore nothing but a thin, floating veil."

"They say he prefers to sleep on a floor instead of in a bed."

"Do you really think she's a Bolshevik, my dear—maybe you ought not to stay."

"The husband doesn't look a day over twenty."

"She creates an air of magnificent illusion which lifts her among the great artists."

New York World Oct. 15, 1922

302. THE AMERICAN SCENE

TRADE-MARK

PROVINCETOWN AND CAPE COD

August 26, 1950
Dear Mel - next week
I'm going to see Picasso
in New York! I may stay
to see the leaves turn
red, and then return to
our lovely California sum-
mer. Have you and Mr. Frou-
de decided if you want Isaac Stern
instead of Kleiber? Or whom
do you want me to start when
I'm back? Have you photo?
I hope you all had a nice
summer and gathered strength
for the be-
ginning of
WORK! Best regards - Bert

MACKEREL DORIES, PROVINCETOWN

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POST CARD



Mr.

MEL WACKS
5189 Jefferdale Ave.
WOODLAND HILLS
CA. 91364

October 11, 1980

Dear Mel, Thanks for your letter of October 6. Yes - I enjoyed my vacation tremendously, though I spent comparatively little time in New York City. I lived in the beautiful penthouse apartment of a nephew, who was still in the country with his wife, and from there made trips to Long Island, New Jersey and New Hampshire, visiting friends and relatives. The people I wanted to see in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens I asked to come to see me instead of having to rush around all over the place with the horrid subway. As the penthouse had a beautiful terrace running around 2 sides, planted with red trees and lots of flowers, my visitors didn't mind the trip and loved to sit under the trees high above the City. Like you I was given a

membership card for the Picasso show
but my niece had bought a ticket
for me months ago, so I went twice
which was much less strenuous. Like
everyone I spoke to - you too -
I liked the early work best, but
he later painted a few very beau-
tiful pictures you will remember
too - of his little son, of a Spanish
bullfighter and of one of his wives.
I was very glad I could go. But now
I am very glad to be back in Ca-
lifornia, and eager to start work.
I'll try to find photos of Isaacson,
but I hope he sends you some good
ones! How smart of you to have
taken photos of Carnegie Hall! Since
I had left my camera at home I
was sorry I couldn't! Let's hope that
Rebecca will come out well - I'm
looking forward to seeing it finished.
My very best regards to Costa, the
girls, and of course, to you.
Lila.

January 30, 1981 -

Dear Mel - just now your
envelope with the record cover
and the other picture of Isaac
Stern, as well as the package
with the 3 Rebecca Gratz
medals arrived together.

Thank you very much for
all of it.

I'm very glad that the
medals came out nicely.

But I am disappointed
that you couldn't find
any more pictures of I.S.
than I could! As a matter
of fact, that very same
record cover I had a xerox
made from! - It was the
first and only profile
I discovered - but I really
don't think it is a good

pose - it's the wrong side -
the violin bow seems to
cross out the face!

The other picture you sent
is most remarkable for
a medal - I'm sure you
know that too - and the
4 or 5 other pictures I have
found, or friends sent me,
were all "en face" and grin-
ning widely - just not
right for an image on a
medal. I'm sure you agree.
But I shall try again to
get some photos out of
Mrs. Lamont, Stern's mana-
ger, at 140 W 57 Street N.Y. 10019
(JCM Artists LTD.) Phone 212-556-5600
So far my efforts and those of

2. a friend of mine in New York
*whom I asked to go to that office
personally were unsuccessful.
Mr. Samson asked my friend
for whom the medal was to
be made, if Mr. Stern would
have to take part in any
"dedication ceremonies" etc. or
has to have special pictures
taken! I made my friend
that Mr. Stern was not to be
bothered, inconvenienced, in-
volved, in any way whatso-
ever, that all I need is a
GOOD profile picture* of
his right side, preferably
playing his violin (every artist
holds the violin differently,
and a short necked person
like Isaac Stern looks very
different holding the instru-
ment than a slender young

It can be an old photo from years back!!

artist with a long neck!)
I also sent my friend the
Plyer with ^{the} Golda hair medal
and all the other information
she wanted printed in "black
and white", so she doesn't
have to make long speeches
to convince that watchdog
manager that I am not
just some amateur wanting
a photo of Mr. Stern.
Maybe if you get in touch
with Ms. Samson you would
be more successful!
The Carnegie Hall idea seems
very good to me. So, until
I can start the obverse with
the portrait, why not do
the reverse with Carnegie
Hall. What inscription do
you propose for the reverse?

3. I wish you had chosen a man
like Aron Copland - also a
famous Jew - whose photos
are all over - from all sides,
in all poses - dramatic
and interesting. He has a
face full of character and
is not as camera shy as
Isaac Stern seems to be.
Anyway, I hope I can go
ahead with whoever it
is to be, soon.

Keep well, and give my
best regards to Ester, the
girls and yourself.

Gertrude.

February 16. 1981

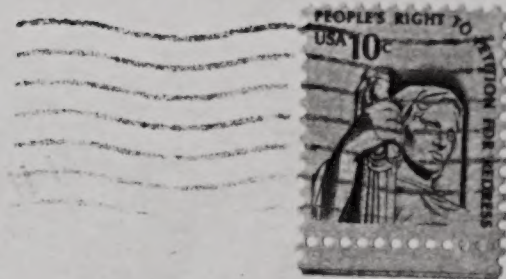
Dear Mel - Thank you very
much for your letter and
the photos. They'll help.
I spoke with Mr. Frouer
who told me to call up
Mrs. Raphael. I shall do
that on Wednesday and
then look at whatever
pictures they have of
Isaac Stern. I do hope
to be able to start
the medal soon before
any other work pops
up and has to be done
"by yesterday"!! I gave

one of the Rebecca Costa
medals to Howard and Rose
Marie as a Valentine Day's
present and they were
delighted with it.

It's good to hear that
all of you are well.
I hope it stays that
way. You surely enjoy
Spring as much as I
do and I am happy as
always to be in Califor-
nia!

Maybe you'll be in
Berkeley some day soon
and can come to see me.
Until then,
Best regards,
Gerta.

March 19, 1981
 Dear Mel - Thank you very much for the article in the Times and for the letter from M. Rochette. Of course I was pleased with both as you, no doubt are too. But why do you always have to stress my age?! I don't mind but I can't see that it's of any importance whatsoever especially if the work done is good. I am working very hard trying to get a good likeness of Mr. Stern. With the poor photos I have it is most difficult, and you know I will not be satisfied with anything less than a good likeness. I would be nice to see you in the Spring or summer. Until then stay well and happy.
 Regards to you and the family.
 Berta.



TO Mr.

Mel Wacks

5189 Jeffdale Ave.

Woodland Hills

Ca 91364

100PM 930-7

March 23, 1981

Dear Mel, when I first read your letter with your new proposal for the reverse of the new medal, I thought it was O.K. But on second thought it somehow nubbled me the wrong way. This list of violinists on the reverse would shift the emphasis from a medal honoring Isaac Stern to one honoring a group of Jewish American artists, and then the question comes up: "Why pick Isaac Stern to represent these several famous people?" Is he superior to the rest of them as an artist, so that he deserves being singled out with a portrait on the front of the medal, while the others just serve as a decorative motif with their names only?

I feel that a medal for Isaac Stern should have no other artist's name on it, and I still think Carnegie Hall is a good reverse with just a

By the way, would you like to see my spare plaster cast of Beethoven's head? I'll show it out - I have a little room I can't keep any more. I'm sure you'll like it.

Japan Stern in addition to his name, B.

remark that Stern was one of those who helped preserve this venerable place for many artists to come. It needs no lengthy quote. The violin with D.S. name ^(is D.S. name). If you could send me those photos you told me you made of Carnegie Hall, I'll decide if I can make something interesting out of the building. Allright?

Best regards for all
the Wacks family -

Gertrude

D. S. Victor just came in and I showed him your letter without comment. After he read it he said with almost exactly the same words ~~that~~ I told you in this letter! But he liked the idea of the well modeled violin, maybe with some words referring to

March 31st, 1981

Gerta Reis-Wiener
1320 Addison Street, Apt C-437
Berkeley, California 94702

Dear Miss Reis-Wiener:

Thank you for your note of March 8th regarding your commission by the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley to make a medal honoring Isaac Stern for their series of famous Jewish-Americans.

Inasmuch as this will be a commercial item to be sold by the Museum, Mr. Stern feels rather strange about being involved in this matter.

I am enclosing the only photograph I have of Isaac Stern with a violin with the understanding that Mr. Stern does not wish to be involved in this undertaking.

With best wishes.

Cordially,

Lee Lamont

Lee Lamont

LL/bg
enc

April 4, 1931

Dear Mel - many thanks for your nice letter with the Carnegie Hall photos. I think they are excellent and I can do something with them. How about Life this - Although I don't know how I'll ever get that word COMMUNICATIVENESS out of my line! I never heard the word and wonder if I ever really used it.



And lo and behold my direct "communicativeness" to Mr. Lee Samson Isaac Stern's agent, bore fruit, and she not only answered my letter but sent me a big photo! She claims it's the only photo + violin of Stern's she has. She also says rather pointedly, since that photo is a "commercial item" to be sold by the Museum, "Mr. Stern feels

rather strange to be about being involved in this matter", and she sends me the picture "with the understanding that Mr. Stern does not wish to be involved in this undertaking."

When. --

But the irony of it is, that this hard won prize of a photo is the very one I ran first on a record cover when I started looking, and which you sent me on the record cover! Only her photo is not so good! Anyway, I'll use odds and ends of all the poor photos I have and hope to succeed in producing something worth looking at. Though an old German saying comes to mind: "Serves my father right if I freeze my hands - why doesn't he bring me gloves?" So, if D.S. doesn't like his image, it'll be his fault!!

Until we see each other, with greetings to all of you - Gerta.

April 7, 1981

Dear Mel - I hear you groan at the sight of another letter from me, and you might groan some more after reading it.

Right after I sent off my letter of April 4 to you, I reread Ms. Lamont's, accompanying the photo she sent me. And - as before - it gave me an uncomfortable feeling of not being exactly friendly, to say the least.

I showed the letter to Victor, who not only confirmed my impression, but thought that the letter definitely constituted a threat, and I was in danger of getting into a very unpleasant situation with Mr. Stern or his agency for using his person for a "commercial item". Since I was the one who corresponded with Mr. Stern's agent, Ms. Lamont, I, not you or the Museum would be considered responsible for this "trespass" on Mr. Stern's rights!

I don't relish that idea! Frankly, I

am much surprised by Mr. Stern's atti-
tude — at least as presented by Mr. Samuels.
Maybe we should find another subject
for our medal — preferably one who isn't
living any more and can't raise a fuss!

Anyway, Victor advised me to send
you the letter and ask you if you think
we should take the risk, and if you
are willing to take the responsibility
in case we should get into hot water,
before I go on with my work.

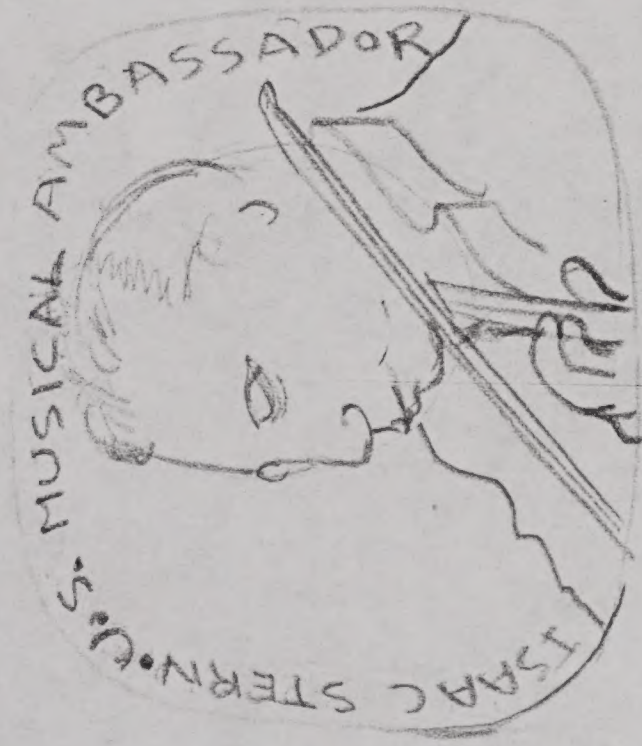
So please, Mel, think this over
carefully and let me know as soon as
possible. Maybe you want to call me.
I'm most always home from 7-8 P.M.
and mostly between 9 and 12 A.M.
My number is: 485-548-3737.

Sorry to bother you so much.

Until we hear from each other again,

Best regards —

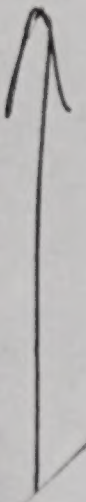
Heide.



I would like
to see obverse
of Stern medal
something like
this



This picture can
help with
details of
violin which
are dark in
record cover
photo



Anne-Sophie Mutter: Golden tone and consummate technique

August 22, 1981

Dear Mel - at last I can send you a photo, if not a very good one, of the finished plaster of the Isaac Stern Medal. (May the plaster turned out blue on the picture, heaven knows.) And as usual I didn't hold the camera level, so the whole thing is slightly distorted. Sorry - but it's good enough to show you how the medal will look. I am pleased with it - it's a good, clean composition, emphasizing the man and his instrument without distractions. You may be able to see too, that I did not smooth out his face as I did the other parts of the relief, which makes it look very alive. People who see it are much taken by the likeness, and immediately

recognize the face without my
having told them who it is.
I hope you feel the same way
about it.

I'm working very hard on the
Carnegie Hall side: Architecture in
a relief is a hard nut to crack.
I hope to be able to get it all
finished by the time you come
to Berkeley, so you can pick up
the whole works!

By the way, if you find you want
something to go under the image
of the building, there would be space
for it.



Let me know. ~~But not~~
COMMUNICATIVENESS!! I just had an idea! Why not put the words,

Edvard has been made manager of the Futurist
Design Lab of IBM in England for 2 years! So
off they'll go on October 1. and I'll be a
poor old orphan! But I'm happy for
them. And I'll go to visit them. Sure,
after the medal is finished! The best to
you and the 3 girls. Best!

"I mean from below" and
among the lower edge as indicates.
A drawing in heavy relief!

September 3, 1981

Dear Mel - it is difficult - but you have managed to make me boiling mad!

First you announce that you are disappointed in the medal because I did not show Isaac Stern young and thin as you knew him and I never did - an unreasonable expectation on your part indeed.

Then you feel it to be necessary to assure Isaac Stern's status as a famous violinist by putting him in stiff, formal attire, which is more and more often being abandoned in favor of more comfortable clothing by many artists - including Isaac Stern. In none of the many published photos of him I have seen does he wear a tie! Look at the photos you took yourself!

You write me you are very troubled because of these changes in my design you deem are necessary.

I assure you that I am even more troubled because of just that! My reputation as an artist depends on the quality of my work and I must refuse to make changes that will destroy a carefully planned composition and clutter up a good portrait with a lot of nonessential detail.

Considering the long time we have successfully worked together, I am ready to compromise by putting Isaac Stern's name where you suggested it in the incused lettering style I used on the Golda Meir medal, and to eliminate the facsimile signature at the bottom left. (It's illegible anyway.) The empty space I shall use to make you happy be lightly indicating a lapel, starting at the top of the neck and following the latest Brooks Brothers line — which definitely does not form the triangle you have set your mind on at the level which would show on the medal.

I shall not discuss the reverse now, because I want to be sure first if you want me to continue working on this medal or would prefer to give it to another artist. Let me know.

Best regards to you and
to your ladies.

Geeta.



September 6, 1981

Dear Mel — I must apologize for having lost my temper and that you were the victim!

I have made the changes you suggested and your criticism was right — it is a better medal now —.

But I'm afraid I cannot put people on the reverse. The section of the Carnegie Hall Building showing the entrances, the marquis with "CARNEGIE HALL" on it and the decorative arched windows above as your photograph shows it, does not reach far enough down on the medal to allow for people showing. The other photo, head on, would

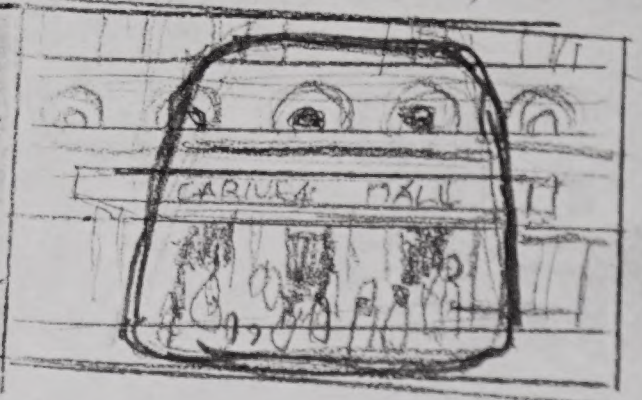


make a very boring composition and the people would be so small

that no features would show. So I am now confirming to work out this view. The perspective makes it interesting.

Best regards as always,

Ben



Mr. Robert Armitage
Metal Arts Co.
142 Portland Ave
Rochester, N.Y. 14621

Berkeley, November 25, 1981

Dear Mr. Armitage,

By now Mr. Wacks of the Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley probably has shipped the 2 original plaster models for the new medal the museum is sponsoring. It honors Isaac Stern, with a portrait on the obverse, and Carnegie Hall on the reverse.

I have done 5 other medals in this series of "Famous Jewish Americans" and I asked Mr. Wacks for your name, so I could draw your attention to certain effects I would like to be preserved in the reproduction of this medal. Mr. Wacks assured me you would see to it that your co-workers would honor my wishes if at all possible.

Oh boy, a spelling mistake!
The face of Isaac Stern has purposely not been smoothed as the rest of the medal and I would like it to remain slightly textured and not be buffed to a bright shine.

I would also like sufficient oxidation, so the lettering and outlines stand out well.

Thanking you for whatever you can do
yours sincerely

Gerla Ries-Wiener.

December 8.81

Dear Mel - on the 25. of November I wrote to Mr. Crumage of Metal Arts Co. and had a Xerox made before I sent it to send to you. But the next morning, when I wanted to write you, I could not find that Xerox! I went back to the place I had it made, thinking I had ^{where} forgotten it on the counter - but it wasn't there. So I concluded I had lost it on the street. Just now I was looking for something else where I put things I don't want to lose - and there it was "in a safe place"! - So now you know what I wrote him, and if it sounds too unprofessional you can ^{explain} correct it for him in your best neomissmatic jargon! People keep asking me when the medal will be available - a question I can't answer, of course, and they also ask me what the medals cost and where they can get them. So you have a list you could send me? I was also asked if one can still buy the Golda Meir medal and what it costs. Can you tell me? I hope this hectic month won't wear you and Ester out. Have a good Aime! The best to all four of you. Better.

April 20, 1982

Dear Mel - can you imagine my surprise when one of my neighbors, who had lent me his violin to work from when I did the Stern Medal, and whom I had shown the flyer you had sent me, came to show me the medal he had received on Saturday. His wife had taught him Stern at the Conservatory of Music when he was a child, and had ordered the medal. She was as surprised as I was that I hadn't received it yet, while she had! And I had asked you (as usual, but unsuccessfully) to send

②
me a sample as soon as you
receive one, so mistakes
might be corrected before it
is sold to the collectors!
You had given me Mr. Armitage's
name and I had written him
to please leave Stern's face
untouched - to not disturb
the texture. What have they
done now? Scratched the
face so he looks like an old
man with a wrinkled and
pockmarked face! I couldn't
believe my eyes. Probably they
had overpolished it and to
make up for it added the scars.
Of course I'm horrified. But
imagine how Isaac Stern will

③ feel! He will say: "You see, I was right in not wanting to have anything to do with the whole business!"

You wrote me - or rather, it says on the fliers that there will be very small quantities available of this medal - so there may be an opportunity to erase those awful scratches, though I am afraid ^{that} they will do so it by trying to correct it!

To make you feel better after my justified outburst I must tell you that the reverse with Carnegie Hall came out VERY well! I'm happy with that. Best regards to you and the ladies. Gertrude.

May 8, 1982

Dear Mel - you probably have wondered why you haven't heard from me after you called, and after I received the 4 mags! Well - I immediately wrote you, as the enclosed will tell you. But - - -

Will you please ask your Post office Inspector where he picks up his certified letters, who, since you surely get plenty of mail to his address, cannot figure out that the Mel Wacks at 5189 Jefferson Ave. must be the same Mel Wacks at 5189 Jefferson Ave.!!? Can you

beat that? Of course I was
careless, adding 2 letters to
your street name - - but ---

Anyway, I won't have to
say anything more as
it's all in the "undelivered"
letter. I hope this time
around you'll get it!

Best regards,
Mel.

P.S. Don't forget to let me
know if you expect these
4 "marcs" (as you said "medals"
back.

May 1, 1982

Dear Ned - I just received the 4 medals, and I want to send you my comment as quickly as I can so you won't be on Penderhook's longer than necessary. You surely will be pleased to hear that I had expected worse! I don't know whether you know which medal I am talking about, but: all of them have ^{so} much patina, which makes them look dirty!

Nr. 283 is the least offending in that respect - but it has that "pockmark" looking face I tried to describe to you.

Nr. 282 is the worst as far as patina on the right side goes, almost obliterating ~~Donna~~ Helen's name! But on that one the face is O.K.

② N. 281 is in between. So is
N. 246 which has good skin but
medium bad patina.

I propose to leave off the
patina completely, as you
said the gold ones had none
and look well. Generally
the patina makes the letters
stand out better, but in
this case it doesn't.

The Carnegie Hall side is
fine - I don't guess my
hard work at least paid off
here, and patina or no patina
probably makes little
difference.

By the way, none of the
medals you sent me has
the scratches on the face

③ That showed on the medal
that the woman ^{here} brought.
I shall ask her to let me
look at it ^{again} to compare
hers with the ones you sent.
I just tried to call Marika
to ask her if she knows a
way to take off the patina -
but she wasn't home.
I'm so sorry you had all
that trouble with Stern, Car-
negie Hall and the foundry!
As I said: Stick to the dead -
then maybe in the fall, after
I come back from visiting
Edward in England, you have
thought up a nice, peaceful
person we can honor with a medal.
Do you want me to send the
medals back to you?
Best regards to the Watts Quarters.
Greta.